



Using social media and digital tools for learning

Identify your approach:

An important part of using social media and digital communication tools strategically is setting yourself some principles of how you will approach and engage with various people and content. Being clear about your reasons for using sites, platforms, or tools and being thoughtful in how you behave online can have a powerful effect on your education and career.

Using social media strategically:

When using social media for a specific purpose it is always a good idea to consider your strategy. The following are good things to consider when using digital tools for learning:

- Put the purpose first – you should always consider what you are hoping to achieve before using any digital tool, considering this will help you to choose the best tool for the job.
- Look at what is out there – there are many online tools that could potentially help you with your learning and these aren't limited to social media networks such as Facebook or Twitter.
- What are other people doing? – It is always useful to consider how other people have used these tools for education. You could have a key figure in your field in mind and research their methods. Other professionals can often be willing to share their practices if you reach out on social media.
- Get organised – it is always useful to plan your online strategy – perhaps using the above bullets as a template to consider your social media use. Having a plan usually makes it easier to consider your next steps and analyse results of your findings.
- Review how you use social media / digital tools – technology is always changing, as will your needs throughout your studies and professional career, therefore you should regularly review how you intend to interact with online materials.

How can different social media sites enhance learning?

Here are some ideas that you could think about:



X (Twitter) and Threads:

- Keep up to date with live discussions from around the world following events such as major news or updates in industry.
- To promote a project e.g. blog or to gather information by posting the link to an online survey for data collection.
- An opportunity to be part of the conversation within a professional industry.



LinkedIn:

- Reach out and connect with industry experts and their networks via company pages.
- Promoting yourself and your professional/academic achievements – this information can also be seen by employers.
- Joining groups of discussion – initially to observe, and later to contribute



Facebook:

- Connecting with your peers and coordinating study using closed groups
- Finding out what's going on at your institution through relevant pages.



Pinterest:

- Gathering ideas, particularly if you're a visual learner.
- Storyboarding ideas.
- Developing a portfolio.
- Creating a visual reading list.



How does it enhance communication:

Tools like WhatsApp, Snapchat and Discord can be useful when using together in groups to maintain a direct line of communication and organise roles and activities.

Horizon Scanning

Even after considering all the above, it is important to continue to consider the merits of other social media tools and environments as they continue to develop. Do some research – how are others using tools, and what kind of problems are they solving?

Considerations

Most social media are free to use. However, you relinquish some rights on your own data when engaging with these services. Some digital tools can require a subscription for access to a fully featured version.